

# **Integrity**

## **Defining Christian Character**

### **Matthew 5:20**

There is a standard for Christian character that defines, in large part, the very essence of Christianity. What exactly do we find when we go in for a close look at what Jesus reveals to us about Christian integrity?

### **Jesus Used the Pharisees as the Antithesis of God's Standard of Righteousness**

#### **Matthew 5:20**

- Where did they miss the point?
  - They were minimalists (Matt. 5:21-30)
  - They ignored context (Matt. 5:33-48)
  - They were materialists (Lk. 16:14)
  - They devalued the place of the heart (Mk. 7:14-23)
  - They coveted the praise of men (Matt. 23:5-11)
  - They majored on minors and minored on majors (Matt. 23:23-24)
  - They did not understand love (Jn. 5:39-42)
- When we consider the Pharisees had considerable influence on everyday Judaism, we can well understand Jesus' numerous clashes with this sect.

### **Jesus, however, is the Positive Embodiment of True Righteousness**

#### **John 14:8-9**

- What did He understand?
  - He saw the connections of specifics to their underlying principles (Matt. 22:38-40)
  - He insisted on context (Matt. 22:42-46)
  - He was spiritual (Matt. 6:33)
  - He understood the vital importance of the heart (Matt. 15:8)
  - He sought approval from the Father (Jn. 8:54)
  - He majored on majors and minored on minors (Matt. 9:13; 12:7)
  - He knew the fundamental importance of love (Mk. 12:28-34)
- When we consider Jesus is to have the greatest influence on Christianity, His opposition to all unrighteousness is well understood.

The comparison between Jesus and the Pharisees is at the crux of helping us understand Christian character. Its roots are deep in the heart and in the word with love as the ingredient that brings it to life. Character is about the wholeness of men and women in their relationship with Christ. Practicing this love-based life is a powerful force in establishing credibility with the world!